has decided to go on an indefinite strike in support of its demand for merger of 50 per cent Dearness Allowance with pay, grant of trade union facilities and pension;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the action taken by Government to look into their demands?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise in view of (a) above.

Conversion of Vacant Looking Post Offices into Shopping Areas

1454. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the action taken to modernize the Indian Post Offices to combat the hi-tech invasion;

(b) whether Government proposed to transform the vacant looking post offices into shopping areas; and

(c) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) The Department has been modernizing and computerizing its Post Offices since early 1990s. Upto Ninth Five Year Plan, 1772 Post Offices were provided with computers. During the Tenth Five Year Plan, it is proposed to computerize and network all 845 Head Post Offices and 6861 large Sub Post Offices. Some other modernization initiatives to combat the hi-tech invasion include transmission of money orders using VSAT technology, setting up Automatic Mail Processing Centres at Mumbai and Chennai, introduction of new e-based services such as e-Post, e-Bill Post, Track and Trace for Speed Post articles, on-line handling of customers grievances.

(b) and (c) Post Office buildings are constructed or hired as per laid down norms. Every effort is made to optimally utilize the space available in Post Offices and to avoid 'vacant look'. Post Offices are furnished with proper counters, public space, transacting facilities. Of late, the Department

has introduced several new financial and premium services to earn additional revenue like Retail Post, International Money Transfer Service, retailing of insurance products and mutual funds. These new services require additional space. Under the circumstances, there is no plan to use Post Offices for shopping areas.

Downfall of BPO Sector

1455. SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have noticed the future downfall of the BPO Sector;

(b) whether the U.S. stands about the outsourcing issue has any impact upon the Indian IT Sector;

(c) whether the India's most employed youth in IT Sector would have to lose their job in future; and

(d) Government's stand in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) No downfall of the BPO in Information Technology sector is anticipated. Rather this sector in India is upbeat now and the future seems to be promising.

(b) The stand of the US Federal Government as it appears today is not against any outsourcing in Information Technology.

(c) In view of (a) and (b) above, the question does not arise.

(d) Government as such is continuously taking appropriate measures to retain the competitiveness of the Indian Information Technology sector. Details of the various steps taken towards this are given in the statement.

Statement

Steps taken by the Government to boost the Software Industry and bring it at par with other Countries

1. Approvals for all foreign direct investment proposals relating to the Information Technology Sector, with the exception of Business-to-consumer (B2C) e-commerce are under the automatic route.